



Penny Bernard Schaber

STATE REPRESENTATIVE 57th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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Senate Passes Rep. Bernard Schaber's Bill Closing Daycare Loophole on Unanimous 33-0 Vote

Assembly Leadership Remains Quiet on Bringing Bill for Vote

MADISON- A bill authored by State Representative Penny Bernard Schaber (D-Appleton) and Senator Mike Ellis (R-Neenah) moves forward after receiving unanimous approval in the State Senate. The bill would close a loophole in state law that allows daycare centers to operate without licenses by simply calling themselves private schools.

The loophole first came to light in the spring of 2010, when the Appleton Fire Department shut Grace's Garden Academy, a local day care center, for building code violations. The inspector found numerous violations, including infants sleeping in a closed basement room with no supervision or monitors, no functional smoke detectors, and a basement packed with toys from the floor to ceiling. The inspector also found a total of 19 children, ranging in age from three months to five years, under the care of only three adults. Inspectors from the state Dept. of Children & Families (DCF) attempted to close the center in the fall of 2009, but Grace's Garden was able to remain open when the owner declared it a private school.

Assembly Bill 215 would close this loophole by requiring private schools that care for children under the age of three to obtain a license to operate a daycare or be accredited in Wisconsin.

Rep. Bernard Schaber thanked the Senate for their actions. "I'm grateful that the Senate has been able to set partisanship aside and pass a bill that will help to keep kids safe," said Rep. Bernard Schaber. "This bill will protect children from day care providers who cut corners and endanger their safety, without burdening legitimate private schools and day care centers with additional regulations."

Senate Bill 179, the Senate companion bill to AB 215, passed the Senate unanimously on a 33-0 bipartisan vote yesterday, March 6th. AB 215 received bi-partisan support in passing through the Committee; the bill is waiting to be scheduled in the Assembly. Assembly Leadership has been quiet and non-committal despite multiple requests for a vote. There is only a week and a half left during the regular session and likely only one or two days left for the bill to be scheduled for a vote.

"I hope that the Assembly will follow the example set by the Senate and take these bills up for a vote," said Rep. Bernard Schaber. "Time is short and we only have a few session days left, the time is now to vote on this important bill that has received broad and bi-partisan support in both houses. This is a simple bill that will help prevent more, potentially tragic situations like what occurred at Grace's Garden in Appleton."

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